

Green Gifts Sharing Your Environmental Mindset with Your Friends.

The winter holiday season is all about giving. This season, instead of just giving a gift, why not give more by sharing something else with your friends and family? By giving away eco-friendly gifts this holiday season, you can not only show those around you that you care about both them and the environment, but also get them involved in greener activities.

When looking for environmentally friendly gifts, try to find products such as shade-grown chocolate or coffee, or items made with recycled glass, metal, plastic or paper. You can also give consumable gifts like soap, food or candles.

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I'm Dreaming of A "Green" Christmas

According to Robert Liliendfeld, between Thanksgiving and New Years Day, Americans throw away 900,000 metric tons of garbage each week, including holiday wrapping and packaging. This year, why not start a new holiday tradition? Use these simple tips to incorporate the "reduce, reuse, recycle" philosophy into your family's holiday celebrations and make it a "green" Christmas!

The majority of our holiday waste is composed of gift wrapping. Store-bought wrapping paper is usually used once and then taken to the landfill. Consider re-using large pieces to wrap smaller gifts next year. Don't forget, non-metallic gift wrap is recyclable, so don't put it in the trash, put it in your recycling cart. An even better idea is to make your own gift wrap from newspapers, magazines, catalogs or cloth. Be creative - you can use fabric items to wrap your gifts, like using a dish towel to wrap a cookbook, a scarf to wrap clothing or scraps of fabric that can then

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be reused by your recipient to make a piece of clothing or a blanket. Reusable gift bags are also an easy way to be environmentally conscious with gift wrapping. They are easier



to use because no wrapping is involved and, because they are reusable, they don't waste any paper. **Fun Fact:** If every family reused just two feet of holiday ribbon, the 38,000 miles of ribbon saved could tie a bow around the entire earth!

Another way to be more eco-friendly this holiday season is to use more energy efficient lights by replacing your old incandescent Christmas lights with LEDs (light-emitting diodes). LED Christmas lights are found to be 90 percent more efficient than the traditional Christmas lights. According to a U.S.

Another great idea is to give gifts that help people cut down on their waste like reusable grocery bags and refillable water bottles. Helping your loved ones learn these simple green habits can also be the first step in getting others involved in protecting the environment. For parents & grandparents who don't need more "stuff," making a donation in their name or just giving them your time with coupons for household or computer help can become the best gift they receive.

Making your own cards on recycled paper or sending e-cards helps save paper and gives a unique, personal touch that everyone will appreciate. Giving a "green" gift is one of the best ways to enjoy an eco-friendly holiday season.



Department of Energy study, if everyone replaced their conventional holiday lights with LEDs, at least two billion kilowatt-hours of electricity could be saved in a month. The amount of energy saved could power 200,000 homes for a year!



Decorations are another part of the holidays that can easily be turned "green" and can create many opportunities for personalization and creativity. One thing you can do is decorate your tree the old-fashioned way, with popcorn and cranberries and then leave the strings outside for hungry birds to eat when the holiday is over. You can also make your own eco-friendly recycled or homemade ornaments. You can use almost anything you can find in your house to make creative, one-of-a-kind Christmas tree ornaments.

Old CDs, puzzle pieces, coke cans, egg cartons, burnt-out light bulbs, popsicle sticks, etc. You can even bake cookie ornaments! Just be creative, use your imagination and the internet and your Christmas tree will be the "greenest", one-of-a-kind Christmas tree in the neighborhood! No one will have the same, eco-friendly decorations as you and you will have fun family memories connected to each and every ornament.

Finally, be sure to recycle your Christmas tree. The tree can be ground into woodchips and used to mulch gardens or parks or to prevent erosion at a local watershed instead of sitting in a landfill. Morgan Hill residents can recycle their trees at the curb as yard waste. Remove all decorations, tinsel and stands and cut trees into 3-foot sections. Flocked trees are acceptable. This holiday season, give the earth a gift by enjoying an eco-friendly Christmas!



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This Month's Green Living Tip:

Recycle Holiday Cards

Approximately \$64 is spent annually by the average American household on holiday cards and gift wrap. By reusing, recycling, and donating old holiday cards to charitable organizations, you can benefit the environment after the holiday season. You can cut cards that don't have writing on the first side in half and use them as postcards, punch holes in pieces of



holiday cards and use them as tags for next year, or even reuse cards by writing messages on a post-it note inside and then passing it on to another recipient. The same card can be used for years, and a holiday tradition can be created! These ideas will save you money, so recycling old holiday cards benefits both you and the environment!